

Warfield Building
501 King Street
Alexandria
Virginia

HABS No. VA-681

HABS
VA
7-ALEX,
145-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

WARFIELD BUILDING

HABS
VA
7-ALEX
145-

Location: 501 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia (northwest corner of intersection with Pitt Street)

Present Owner: Demolished in 1968 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: A combined commercial-apartment structure of the early twentieth century, this building captured to best advantage its corner location and appealed to an increasingly cosmopolitan town population.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The building was commenced in 1905 and completed in 1906.

The Alexandria Gazette of September 2, 1905, carried the following notice:

Mr. Edgar Warfield, jr., will in a few weeks remove his drug store from the northwest corner of King and Pitt streets to the store lately occupied by Mr. D. H. Appich, on King street, where he will be located while the work of erecting a large and modern building is in progress on the site of his present store. Mr. Warfield proposes to build a three-story brick structure, the first floor of which will be used by him as a drug store and the upper portion arranged into flats.

2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: Edgar Warfield, Jr. was the first owner; subsequent owner unknown.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Joseph F. Rodgers was the contractor.
5. Original plan and construction: On September 27, 1905 the following notice appeared in the Alexandria Gazette:

Mr. Edgar Warfield, jr., has given to Mr. Joseph F. Rodgers a contract for erecting a handsome three-

story brick building at the northwest corner of King and Pitt streets. The building is to front on King Street 21 feet and extend 75 feet on Pitt street. It is to be of gray brick trimmed with Indiana sandstone and with iron cornices. The first floor is to be used by Mr. Warfield as a drug store and will be equipped in the most modern style. The second and third floors are to be fitted up as flats with five rooms and bath each, all most conveniently arranged. The building when completed will be one of the handsomest in the city.

The plans were somewhat changed, as the building, when completed, is described in the Gazette of April 12, 1906:

NEW BUILDING OCCUPIED

Mr. Edgar Warfield, jr., has moved into his new building at the northwest corner of King and Pitt streets, and he was today receiving the congratulations of his friends and acquaintances. He was the recipient of many beautiful flowers. ... The new structure is one of the prettiest and most imposing in Alexandria, and probably the largest constructed by a private individual. It has a frontage of 22 feet on King Street and 78 feet on Pitt street. The exterior of the structure is of Roman brick which shows to great advantage. The store proper has been fitted up in the most modern manner, and similar, in every respect, to the finest seen in larger cities. A tarazza floor, with a cyrannic border has been laid which adds materially to the interior appointments. The finishings are in mahogany and marble and there are five large bevelled plate glass mirrors. The prescription department is equipped with every modern convenience for the handling of this important branch of business. The building has three stories, the two upper floors forming what is to be known as the "Warfield Apartments." There are six rooms and a bath on each floor, and the conveniences in the shape of plumbing, electrical bells, speaking tubes, etc., are modern in every particular. The building has been wired for electricity and all the fixtures for same installed. Hot and cold water can be obtained on either floor and each room is to be heated by hot water. The entrance to the flats is on Pitt street through a reception hall finished in oak, and forming a fitting introduction to the luxurious apartments above. These apartments compare favorably with the best to be found in large cities. Mr. Joseph F. Rodgers was the contractor for the building, and the work is justly commended by all who have inspected it. Numbers of people were conducted through the new building today.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The builder's father, Edgar Warfield, senior, was an officer in the Confederate Army, and his memoirs were published after his death - "A Confederate Soldier's Memoirs," Richmond Masonic Home Press, 1936. The junior Warfield was born in 1842 and died in 1934.

C. Bibliography:

Newspaper articles as cited.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The three-storied building described as of "Roman brick" aspired in detailing and function to similar apartment buildings in large cities. A projecting pavilion facing Pitt Street announced the entrance to the apartments.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Three stories; three bays x seven bays.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Gray Roman brick, trimmed with stone, unpainted.
3. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance to the store was much altered in the mid-1950's. The side entrance to the apartment retains glimpses of the "fitting introduction to the luxurious apartments above," with an arched doorway on which "The Warfield" is painted.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows at the first and second floors have flat brick arches with keystones. The windows at the third floor have semicircular brick arches with stone keys and impose blocks.
4. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Flat with parapet.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice is pressed metal. The brick parapet above has a stone coping.

C. Description of Interior:

One of the two interior photographs shows the stairway rising from the first floor to the apartment floors. Heavy square paneled newels are crowned by knobs and turned balusters support a molded handrail. The second interior photograph shows the mantelpiece in one of the apartments, with Corinthian columns supporting the shelf and the cornice of the overmantel. The overmantel is mirrored.

D. Site:

The building faces south on King Street with the shop entrance set in a truncated corner to face the intersection of King and Pitt Streets.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of
The Historic Alexandria
Foundation
September 1968
Edited by
Antoinette J. Lee
November 1975

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings of downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and George Eisenman supplied the photographs. The material was edited and updated in 1975 by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract for HABS.